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DIRECTORATE OF
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WEEKLY SUMMARY

Special Report

The Chilean Movement of the Revolutionary Left Under Allende

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25X1

THE CHILEAN MOVEMENT OF THE REVOLUTIONARY LEFT UNDER ALLENDE

During his first hundred days as president, one of Salvador Allende's chief accomplishments has been to handle adroitly the disparate political forces in the governing Popular Unity (UP) coalition. At the same time, he has chosen until very recently to give a remarkably free hand to the Movement of the Revolutionary Left (MIR), a small, controversial group of extremists outside the UP. The two dominant—and rival—components of the UP view the MIR quite differently. The orthodox Communist Party (PCCh) strongly condemns the revolutionaries as a threat to the party's own methods and influence. The more extremist Socialist Party (PS), and particularly the hard-line faction that now dominates it, however, treats the MIR as a favored protégé. PS Secretary General Altamirano and his supporters reportedly see the MIR as a tool to force the pace of Marxist revolution in Chile and to ensure that the process becomes irreversible.

Allende has given the MIR an important role in his personal bodyguard and in the new Chilean internal security mechanism that is being developed with Cuban "technical help." In January, he pardoned nearly 50 young terrorists—most of them MIR members—who had been indicted or imprisoned on criminal charges by the former government. For many weeks Allende's government did nothing to curb the mounting wave of disruptive agrarian land invasions that have largely been incited by the MIR. By mid-February, however, Communists were complaining over MIR actions and government appointments/

25X1

History

The MIR was formed in the early 1960s by a group of disparate radical leftists whose main bond was impatience with the legalistic and traditionally political path taken by the Chilean Marxist parties, the Socialists and the Communists. Little was heard of the MIR for the next several years. During this time, however, its younger members were active in several university student organizations and in developing a revolutionary program and capability. Some went to Cuba for training. At the MIR convention in 1967 these "young impatient" forced the old-guard leadership out and took control. The new leaders,

mostly from the University of Concepcion, won control of the student federation that same year. Other MIR activists had a role in the student disturbances that increased about that time. They have been responsible for shifts to the left in even the most conservative private universities and secondary schools in Chile.

In addition to their growing organizational activity among students, peasants, and urban squatters, MIR cells began a series of robberies in 1968 that showed surprisingly good organization and preparation. These thefts were intensified in

Special Report

- 1 -

26 February 1971

SECRET

SECRET

25X1

1969, netting automobiles, arms, documents, and substantial amounts of cash. Only a few of the perpetrators were caught. The MIR claimed that these were not crimes, but "revolutionary expropriations" to support its program of mobilizing and assisting "the exploited Chilean masses."

Terrorism and violence had been rare in Chile, and there was a marked official and public tendency to ignore or to play down increased MIR activity as youthful escapades, despite evidence that improved subversive techniques were being used. The Frei government was eager to preserve an appearance of normality before the 1970 presidential elections. The government was reluctant to act against the MIR because of fear of setting off the retaliatory kidnappings that were occurring in other Latin American countries. The Chilean security forces were neither accustomed nor trained to act effectively against terrorist groups, and they were not urged to do so.

The MIR employed psychological measures as well. These included sympathetic publicity and at least implied threats of retribution. For example, Senator Carlos Altamirano, leader of the Socialist Party's (PS) radical wing and the MIR's chief promoter and protector, said in mid-1969 that an "offensive" would be mounted against the government if police searches against the MIR were not called off. Judges, many of them also law professors, reportedly hesitated to mete out stiff sentences to terrorists for fear of retaliation by students.

The MIR's use of subversive techniques reflected not only Cuban training, but other international contacts. In June 1969, it was discovered that several young European visitors who were in contact with the MIR had brought false passports, weapons, and other specialized supplies into Chile. Other European contacts included a French professor, in Chile under an official cultural exchange, who was deported after being convicted of hiding a fugitive MIR leader. Although receiving outside aid, the MIR appeared to be increasingly nationalistic and self-assured, and it ap-

parently grew no larger despite the greater frequency and success of its activities.

The arrest of some bank robbers in 1969 and early 1970 revealed internal divisions within the group and the alleged existence of breakaway factions. Some of these disclosures, however, appear to have been planted to confuse the police. Several guerrilla training camps discovered in mid-1969 indicated MIR involvement. About the same time, several incidents revealing MIR activity among military units became a matter of concern to some officers.

25X1

By early 1970, the MIR had become an issue within the Communist-Socialist coalition, known as the Popular Unity (UP), that was backing Socialist Salvador Allende in his fourth attempt to gain the presidency. The Communists, chief architects of the UP, were optimistic over the prospects of this popular front strategy against divided political opposition. They considered the activities of the maverick MIR a threat to the "peaceful road" to power. The Communists blamed the MIR for the successful impact of a law-and-order electoral campaign waged against Allende by a conservative candidate. The MIR in turn reiterated its rejection of elections as mere "domestication of the masses" rather than the revolutionizing that was required. The revolutionaries criticized the PCCh as stodgy, sectarian, and subservient to Moscow and warned that the rightists would never allow Allende to take office. When Allende's chances of election improved in mid-1970, however, the MIR was persuaded to curtail its more flamboyant activities

25X1

Special Report

- 2 -

26 February 1971

SECRET

SECRET

25X1

Organization

Besides its small size and tight discipline, one of the MIR's most valuable assets is the compartmentation that has protected its security. The MIR apparently relies on a core of about 600 militants, whose emphasis on mobilizing, training, and organizing others has built up a much larger body of supporters. Many of these supporters are members of peasant or slum organizations manipulated by the MIR. In mid-1970 it was estimated that the MIR controlled about 20,000 squatters in slums in and around Santiago. About the same time, the group began a major effort to organize dissatisfied peasants and Indians in southern Chile.

Most of the 600 MIR members are presently or were recently university students from privileged economic, social, and political backgrounds. Their dedication to urgent revolutionary change is combined with a knowledge of the vulnerabilities and complexities of Chilean politics and psychology, good contacts in influential circles, and an ability frequently to utilize this knowledge to their advantage. Despite differences over tactics, the original group that took control of the MIR in 1967 is still largely in command. The secretary general is Miguel Enriquez, son of the former

rector of Concepcion University (who was forced out by the MIR) and nephew of two former influential Radical Party legislators. Other known leaders include Enriquez' brother Edgardo and his brother-in-law as well as Andres Pascall, who is Allende's nephew, the son of a Socialist deputy, and the son-in-law of the leftist rector of Catholic University. Others are children of well-known members of the Christian Democratic (PDC) and National (PN) parties. Miguel Enriquez' chief rival for leadership apparently is Luciano Cruz Aguayo, half-brother of an officer who was retired from the army in 1970 for involvement with the MIR.

Another leader is Jorge Fuentes, until recently president of the University of Concepcion student federation. When Fuentes returned from a meeting in Havana of the Castro-supported Latin American student Organization (OCLAE) in January 1970, he announced the formation of a Chilean Committee of Support for the Bolivian National Liberation Army guerrilla group. Both Altamirano and Allende were named directors of the committee. The MIR is believed to have collaborated with it as well as with other Socialist-sponsored groups while retaining its own identity.

The didactic function—i.e., training guerrillas and organizing the poor to make them aware of their problems as well as inciting them to violent action—appears to be a major part of the MIR program. In both Santiago and Concepcion the homeless squatters it organized invaded land and set up shantytowns. The MIR members remained with the settlers, providing health and medical services, setting up schools, planning and building



Andres Pascall
Allende's Nephew



Miguel Enriquez
MIR Secretary General



MIR Militiamen

Special Report

- 3 -

26 February 1971

SECRET

SECRET

25X1

shelters, planting gardens, and otherwise helping the occupants to organize and look after themselves. Ideological instruction was probably another offering. Under the Frei government the MIR also organized militia that patrolled the perimeters of the settlements to keep out the regular police, thus providing a refuge for MIR fugitives.

Other MIR cadres remained active among students and peasants in the period before the presidential election. Efforts among urban workers appear to have been less successful than the other MIR organizational activities. In 1969 a group of worker-members broke with the MIR to form their own revolutionary group, claiming that they were made to feel inferior by the better educated leaders. Workers probably resented the MIR criticism that Chilean organized labor was materialistic and had been lulled by the PCCh and moderate Socialists into "bourgeois" attitudes.

Motivation and Methods

There is no reason to doubt the sincerity of the MIR leaders' frequent and public claims of total dedication to the overthrow of the traditional Chilean institutions by revolutionary action. They preferred the re-election of conservative former president Jorge Alessandri in September 1970 on the grounds that this would be the most effective path to arouse the poor and increase their interest in revolutionary action. MIR leaders continue to mistrust the conformity and orthodox methods of the PCCh as slow and ineffectual. They realize, too, that the PCCh considers the MIR its most dangerous rival on the left and would like to eliminate it.

What leaders such as Enriquez see as the outcome of the long revolutionary war they claim is necessary to educate the masses to an awareness of their own best interests is not clear. The voice and the publicity provided the MIR for several

years by the Chilean news media have benefited the MIR but have not clarified its ends. The message remains negative and iconoclastic, even under a Marxist government. The arrogation to themselves of protection as well as incitement to revolution may be the limit of the MIR leaders' reach.

If MIR's ultimate aims are in doubt, however, the efficacy of its methods thus far is not. A combination of well-planned, effective subversive activity and an informed psychological offensive has transformed it from an indulgently tolerated band of radicals to a disciplined force with political influence. The MIR's infiltration of the armed services was aimed at vulnerable points at various levels to obtain useful information as well as supplies. The real extent of the infiltration is not known. The discovery of a few instances of it, however, was a factor that caused officers who opposed Allende to question whether they could act successfully to keep him from the presidency. Many of the officers doubted that they could rely on their troops to support such an attempt. Some high-ranking officers also expressed fear of setting off a civil war, a specter frequently raised in MIR propaganda.

The MIR's exploits and publicity fed the group's zeal and boldness and attracted support for its activities. Some influential Chileans excused MIR's acts as the deeds of Robin Hoods and brushed off as a passing phenomenon the increased evidence of the MIR's use of violence and subversion. The MIR has fed this image by organizing literacy programs in prisons and providing genuine assistance to the poor among whom it agitates.

The logistics aid provided by Altamirano and other PS officials has proven vital to the MIR, although it probably has strings attached. The aid facilitates the MIR's priorities. These include freedom to take direct action in response to opportunity, constant mobility, dispersion of forces, retreat from unfavorable combat, and the maintenance of the initiative.

Special Report

- 4 -

26 February 1971

SECRET

SECRET

25X1

During the lull in terrorist activities before the election last September, the MIR did not let organizational preparedness slip.

President Allende, particularly in the field of internal security, and that it intended to use its influence to ensure the maintenance of revolutionary momentum by the government. Miguel Enriquez announced recently that the MIR struggle will not be over until it considers the capitalistic system dead in Chile.

Allende's reliance on the MIR for his personal bodyguard is a mark of confidence.



Guerrilla Instructor in Police Custody

The remains of training camps, believed to have been established by the MIR for other revolutionary groups, have been discovered in various areas of Chile over the past two years. They show careful preparation and use of paramilitary methods. Some of the camps were apparently cooperative efforts; they included representatives of revolutionary groups from Brazil, Bolivia, Uruguay, and other countries. The extent and nature of MIR ties with these groups before Allende took office is unknown but is now likely to increase.

The MIR and President Allende

When the UP won the presidential election, the particular appeal of the MIR seemed superfluous, and the PCCh renewed its determination to get rid of this annoying group. The MIR showed no interest in joining the coalition.

It was not long, however, before it became apparent that the MIR was acquiring a role under

Allende's confidence in the MIR stems largely from its successful penetration of the plot that resulted in the death of Army Commander Schneider and whose failure strengthened Allende's hold on a constitutional claim to the presidency. Capitalizing on Allende's obsessive fear of plotting against him, the MIR has parlayed its charges of continued antigovernment plotting by "lean and hungry rightists" into a psychological weapon threatening a wide range of Allende opponents, including former President Frei.

In its efforts to goad the new government, the MIR has vowed to maintain its

SECRET

SECRET

25X1

"politico-military structure" intact so long as its leaders consider it necessary. Using its frequent journalistic mouthpiece and supporter, the pro-Castro magazine *Punto Final*, the MIR has made clear its postelection position as revolutionary gadfly and watchdog. It rejected in advance the validity of any concessions by the UP. Like the PS, the MIR opposed as a compromise the PDC support for Allende in the October congressional run-off to confirm his election. Neither Allende nor the PS joined the UP criticism of the rowdy take-over in October 1970 of memorial ceremonies for Che Guevara by the MIR and its squatters' organization.

Soon after taking office Allende took positive steps to help the MIR. He dissolved the riot control unit as the organization had demanded and pardoned MIR leaders accused or imprisoned on criminal and security charges by the previous government. In early December he provided the tacit support that gave the MIR a victory over the PCCh in a violent student election confrontation in November 1970 at the University of Concepcion.

The MIR is now playing a major role in inciting widespread rural land invasions and has set up a revolutionary peasant group that is demanding a more drastic agrarian reform law. A

PDC leader recently termed Allende's present use of the MIR a politically brilliant move. He said that the President is using its activities as the cutting edge to maintain revolutionary drive while the government sticks to legalistic processes. French Revolutionary ideologue Regis Debray praised the MIR as the structural nucleus in the process of revolutionizing Chile when he arrived in Santiago following his release from Bolivia where he was serving a jail sentence for being involved in the ill-fated Che Guevara "guerrilla war."

Allende's political astuteness is one of his most effective assets in a government of contending factions. He may have seen the MIR as a weapon to avoid the PCCh's domination of the administration and his favorable treatment of it as a way to gain approval from extremists in his own Socialist Party. Now, however, Communist and Radical Party leaders of the UP are very concerned over the continuing appointments of MIR members and other extremists to key government posts.

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Special Report

- 6 -

26 February 1971

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